

PROGRESS IN A PLACEMENT SERVICE  
FOR HANDICAPPED PEOPLE.

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Rehabilitation Review  
v. XI May-June 1937 Nos. 5-6

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## PROGRESS IN A PLACEMENT SERVICE FOR HANDICAPPED PEOPLE

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IN seven years during what has been called the "depression" era in this part of the world, two workers (the director or manager and one office worker) have filled 5,263 jobs. This has been achieved at a cost of less than five thousand dollars per annum. In filling these jobs, the handicapped people have been placed in the service of 850 different employers. Minneapolis employers have learned the Placement Service staff will not send anyone for interview unless a worker whose handicap does not interfere with success in that job is available.

### The Bureau's Attitude Toward Employers

When this bureau was established a little more than seven years ago, almost every employer inquired about the handicap of the proposed worker. Now the handicap of the worker is seldom mentioned. Local employers have learned the Placement staff accepts full responsibility for the ability of the handicapped worker to render efficient service in the job under consideration without risk to themselves or danger to associate workers. Some employers still wish to interview the worker for the purpose

of evaluating personality; but many of them explain what skills and personal traits are desired in the job to be filled and then leave the problem with the Placement Service staff, expecting a satisfactory worker to report for duty.

This change in the attitude of employers is undoubtedly due to the service rendered by the Placement Service bureau. At first, prospective employers did not understand what is meant by an efficient handicapped worker. They had not seen a bureau of this kind properly administered. They feared unreasonable demands for employment for many inefficient people. From past experience, they expected placement workers to send people who either couldn't or wouldn't do the work satisfactorily in the job to be filled.

In some cases local employers had been severely "stung" by dishonest people who reported previously developed "concealed" handicaps as newly acquired and then insisted on compensation in unreasonable amounts. This unfairness on the part of some workers had caused some employers to hesitate and others to decline the employment of workers with known handicaps. However, seven years of observing, or dealing with, the Placement Service for Handicapped People has given Minneapolis employers confidence which has modified the attitude of many of them toward handicapped workers.

Before a worker is recommended to an employer, an effort is made to know definitely the nature and severity of the handicap or handicaps; and both employers and workers have learned that the Placement Service staff strives to serve the interests of both impartially. In all the 5,263 placements made during a seven-year period, only two workers have been reported to the bureau for attempted unfairness toward employers concerning handicaps. Both cases were closed promptly without litigation and without paying any cash to anyone. Records in the Placement Service office in each case gave evidence which relieved the employer of liability.

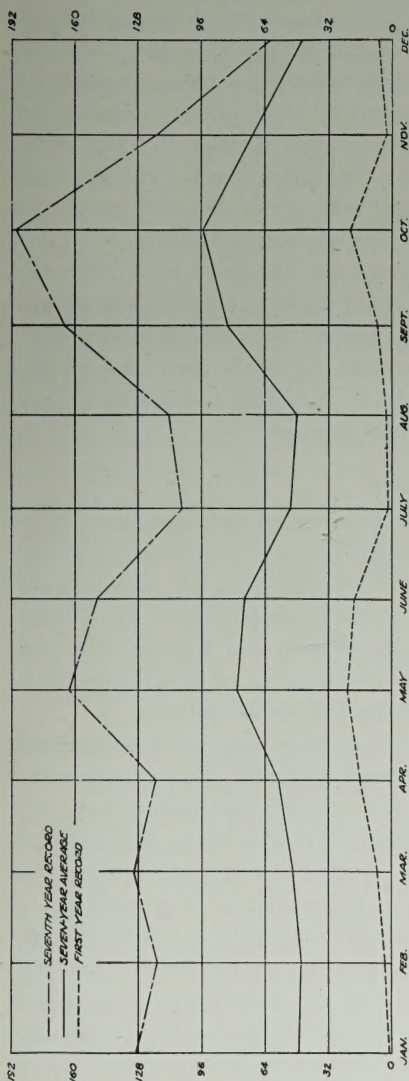


CHART SHOWING NUMBER OF PLACEMENTS; SEVEN-YEAR RECORD BY MONTHS

The record of placements made each month, i. e. the number of jobs filled during each of the eighty-four months represented in the above graph, is shown in detail in the following table.

No actual placement work was planned for January, 1930; but one necessary crippled man. July was spent in studying other placement services; ended litigation and to secure justice for a seriously crippled man. July was made in June.

In Minneapolis many occupations are definitely seasonal. As pictured above in graph and table, during the past seven years, May and October have been the best months for the employment of the handicapped. The testing of the application of preliminary survey findings basic to the founding of the bureau was emphasized the first year. The cooperation of employers was considered of greater importance at that time than the filling of jobs.



## **The Bureau's Attitude Toward Workers**

Another desirable change which has come during the seven years is in the cooperation of handicapped people. At first some workers seemed indifferent toward the recommendations of the bureau staff. They appeared to doubt the wisdom of entering lines of service recommended to them by the staff; and, having accepted a job, seemed to feel free to "change their mind". Some failed to report; and a few did not appear to strive for successful performance of assigned duties.

After several years of experience, clients of the Placement Service are, in general, much more ready to consider the advantages of available employment and to recognize their responsibility when a decision is reached. It is the privilege of the worker to reject any proposed job; but, if he accepts, he knows he must strive for efficiency and fairness.

## **The Attitude of Social Workers**

The committee which recommended establishment of a placement bureau for handicapped people in Minneapolis was composed largely of local social workers who saw urgent need for some organized effort at securing employment for a large number of physically handicapped men and women who had never been given any adequate assistance in solving the problem most vital to their own economic and social welfare.

Practically all members of the above mentioned committee are still helpful in making the work a success. Some have made suggestions for guidance in wise procedures; others have referred large numbers of handicapped people for assistance; and some have invited the bureau director to nominate workers for jobs in their personal service or the service of their agency.

Adherence to truth necessitates reporting that not everybody was entirely pleased with the plans formed and followed by the bureau. There was evidence that the promoters of an older agency preferred the new bureau should become a sort of side show to their own circus. The workers in another agency gave unmistakable evidence of their disappointment when advice

concerning elaborate office records for the new agency were not followed closely. Still another agency management conceived the idea of adopting this "youngster" and making him a full-fledged member of an older and more aristocratic family. However, the Board of Directors decided to operate the bureau according to their own plans for serving handicapped people.

During January of 1930, less than a month after the new agency had been established, two men who had several years of experience in dealing with handicapped people came to the office and asked, among other questions, how many crippled people had been placed in employment. The staff worker informed the men that no effort had yet been made to put any workers in jobs; and then he explained that conferences with employers had resulted in promises to cooperate when the bureau has eligible candidates for jobs which the employers are ready to fill. One of the men said to the other, "We'll be back to see him again when he's filled some jobs". Upon being assured that reputable business men had made what seemed to be sincere favorable statements concerning the employment of efficient handicapped workers, the man said, "Yes, they promised us the same thing; but they haven't done it". Such was the attitude of some experienced social workers in the State of Minnesota early in 1930.

### **The Attitude of Minneapolis Citizens**

Some of the best business and professional people in Minneapolis were on that original committee which approved the plan for organizing a placement bureau for placing handicapped workers in jobs where they can compete with so-called able-bodied people. A few of these influential citizens have kept in close touch with the work of the bureau since it was established. Some of them have employed workers recommended by the bureau for service in their own business.

Many other citizens already knew something about the employment of handicapped workers because they had seen people who are blind, crippled, or deaf rendering efficient service.

This group will cooperate when opportunity is presented. Another group of fine citizens is composed of people who feel so sympathetic toward cripples that they can't bear the thought of working them. It is hoped that these genuinely good, kind citizens may come to realize that work, employment, something useful to do is as great a blessing and necessity for the handicapped as for the normal, strong, able-bodied person. Such kind, noble-minded citizens will become first class employers of handicapped workers when they are convinced that giving suitable employment is great kindness.

There is still another group who have never given any serious thought to the problem of making it possible for a handicapped person to earn an honorable living in his home community while at the same time rendering valuable service to his employer. When this type of prospective employer is approached, he frequently admits that such employment is highly desirable; but he thinks some other man will have to do the employing. Often he finds that while he may not have suitable work in his office or shop he does have it at his home.

### **Efforts at Placement in Other Cities**

For more than a decade prior to beginning the work in Minneapolis, several other large cities had been struggling with the same problem. A study of their experiences indicated that some were yielding attractive returns to their cities for the expenditures of cash and effort made; but others accomplished little, decided for various reasons that the time was unfavorable, and discontinued their program temporarily, at least.

A Placement Service staff in a city larger than Minneapolis is reported to have spent \$10,000.00 in a year without securing many jobs for the handicapped. It is said they tried the usual publicity plans employed in many other worthy enterprises; but the employing public failed to respond in satisfactory numbers; and the office was closed at the end of the year.

Another city much larger than Minneapolis tried to solve the placement problem. An interesting feature of their plan



is reported to have been the emphasis placed on vocational aptitude tests; and on other tests intended to aid the placement staff in getting the worker into a job best suited to his abilities. After the office was closed, a lady who had been a member of the staff explained that they did not think of the placement work for their handicapped people as discontinued; but considered it suspended awaiting more favorable conditions.

In a city somewhat smaller than Minneapolis, an existing agency designated one of its trained social workers to handle the problem of securing employment for handicapped people. The most interesting feature of their plan was the selection of a rather large membership for the board of directors. The plan is reported to have called for weekly meetings of the board at which time the placement executive described the qualifications of workers who were in need of employment; and board members tried to take them into their own business organizations. In some instances, it is reported, the candidates for employment were interviewed by board members at these weekly meetings. The general employing public did not have adequate opportunity to participate. It is reported the service was discontinued for lack of funds.

### **Efforts at Placement in Minneapolis**

For several years members of a committee, mentioned in a previous paragraph, had been studying the problem of developing an efficient placement bureau for physically handicapped people in Minneapolis. It was realized that employers must not be asked to subsidize workers. Since local employers in various lines of business must compete with other employers, they must have efficient workers. It was agreed that a handicapped worker has the right to employment when he is able to compete on an economic basis with an able-bodied worker.

The first big task was to determine who can compete on an economic basis. A leading industrial educator was induced to accept responsibility for decisions concerning what jobs can be done efficiently by workers who have various kinds of handi-

caps. Before expending any cash or energy in experimenting with placement work, it was decided to conduct a survey<sup>1</sup> of a large number of representative local businesses. This called for the analysis of every payroll job, in each business selected, to determine its motion demands upon the worker.

The vision and hearing ability necessary in each job was also considered. To be entitled to employment in a given job, a worker must be able to make all the motions required of the worker and to make them with sufficient speed to enable him to compete on an economic basis with able-bodied workers. Each handicapped worker must also be able to see and hear well enough to meet job demands; and the health of each worker must make him safe to associate with other workers.

After the survey was completed, it was decided to begin placement work to test the application of its findings among local employers. Of course the work of placement required careful continuation of job analysis to determine motion demands and vision and hearing requirements in all new jobs found in occupations not covered during the survey.

When employers call for workers, they usually want them immediately; therefore, it has been necessary for the bureau staff to classify all clients according to the jobs for which they are best qualified. They are then available for prompt placement when opportunity is presented. The classification of clients is accomplished through an effort at evaluating their native capacity, their training, acquired in various ways, and their personal traits which influence success or failure.

In most cases clients who register with this bureau have experience in several kinds of work. Their ability has already been tested in service. Most of them have family obligations and low economic status; hence it is usually impossible for them to be trained for a new occupation except in a subsidized job. Therefore, it appears little advantage is gained from occupa-

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<sup>1</sup> BULLETIN No. 146; June, 1930. Federal Board for Vocational Education, Washington, D. C. Report of Study of Possibilities of Employment of Handicapped Persons in Minneapolis, Minnesota. A Report of Methods Followed in Making the Investigation and of the Essential General Findings of the Survey. Supt. of Documents, Washington, D. C.; price 15 cents.

tional aptitude tests for the majority of these people. However, such reports from other agencies have always been welcomed for consideration by this bureau; and, in the case of exceptional individuals, tests have been encouraged and arrangements have been made with other agencies for such tests.

To emphasize the thought intended in the above paragraph, the case of a middle-aged, highly intelligent deafmute man is presented, as follows: Mr. X was a printer by trade and had been operating a special machine in a high class plant for several years. The "depression" robbed him of his job; and he came to the Placement Service office reporting dire need for suitable employment in which to earn a livelihood for his wife and small children. An evaluation of his ability, experience, and personality justified the Placement staff in advising him to continue in any available job in the printer's field until he could return to his more remunerative specialty.

In his efforts to get anything possible to do, he took a battery of vocational aptitude tests and was informed that he had missed his calling. He should have been an accountant. He returned to the placement bureau eager to train for the new work. He was told of the limited chance for deafmutes in accountancy and advised to exist on odd jobs for awhile and "stick" to printing. He departed in a sad mood; but returned two years later, as a happy printer, to express approval.

From the very day this Placement Service was inaugurated, the bureau staff has realized that employers can't afford to try to cooperate with an agency which does not render prompt service if applied to for workers. Of course, service as here intended, is broader than the mere sending of a worker for an interview. It may mean an immediate reply that no suitable worker is available at the time or it may include a rather lengthy report about the ability, experience, personality, and handicap of the worker who is being sent for the prospective employer to interview. In all cases the employer has a right to prompt complete accurate information concerning the worker



he is invited to consider. Both the worker and the employer are always entitled to efficient service.

The Placement Service staff strives to give frank, friendly, "square-deal" treatment to every person who applies for assistance. Instead of picturing rosy prospects to boost morale, the plain truth is told in the kindest possible manner; and the client is treated courteously and given every possible assistance. Handicapped men and women in Minneapolis have learned they can depend on the bureau staff; and they seldom decline to accept a job called to their attention.

Frequently an emergency arises in some down-town factory causing an employer to call the Placement Service for a worker to be delivered quickly. If an available worker can be reached by telephone, the job is described so the worker may know for what kind of service to dress. The handicapped man or woman is requested to be ready to start to the job within a certain number of minutes; and a staff member calls at the worker's home and drives him or her to the factory. The job, its rate of pay, etc., are explained enroute; and the worker is often presented to the foreman or forelady and is working in less than an hour after the call was received at the Placement Service office.

Since the beginning of its second year, the Placement Service has participated in the Community Fund and has been supervised by a Board of Directors composed of Minneapolis business men who guide its destiny in serving handicapped people and their employers for the benefit of all citizens of Minneapolis. Accurate reports of achievement are made monthly to the Board; and annually to the employing public.

### **Human Effort Expended in Securing Reported Results**

Since this discussion has emphasized the human side, so to speak, of the whole problem of placement as it is influenced by employers, workers, and the public in general, it seems appropriate that efforts of staff members be included. For that reason, the following tabular picture is presented.

**Human Energy Consumed in Filling 5,263 Jobs As Evidenced by the Number  
of Conferences Participated in During a Seven-year Period**

Year	Office Con- ferences with Clients	Outside Con- ferences with Clients	Conferences with Employers	Miscella- neous Confer- ences	Total
1930	1,039	93	1,744	338	3,214
1931	1,638	657	1,232	1,101	4,628
1932	1,278	922	1,562	1,811	5,573
1933	1,727	1,064	1,051	1,492	5,334
1934	1,531	1,078	1,050	1,411	5,070
1935	1,825	1,108	1,256	1,913	6,102
1936	1,614	997	1,062	1,526	5,199
Total	10,652	5,919	8,957	9,592	35,120

This grand total yields an average of sixteen conferences on each workday during the seven-year period. Many of the outside conferences with clients are necessary because it is often impossible to communicate with them by telephone. Conferences with employers enable the placement director to become acquainted with job demands upon the worker in various plants and to inform the employer concerning the availability of desirable workers who deserve consideration for employment.

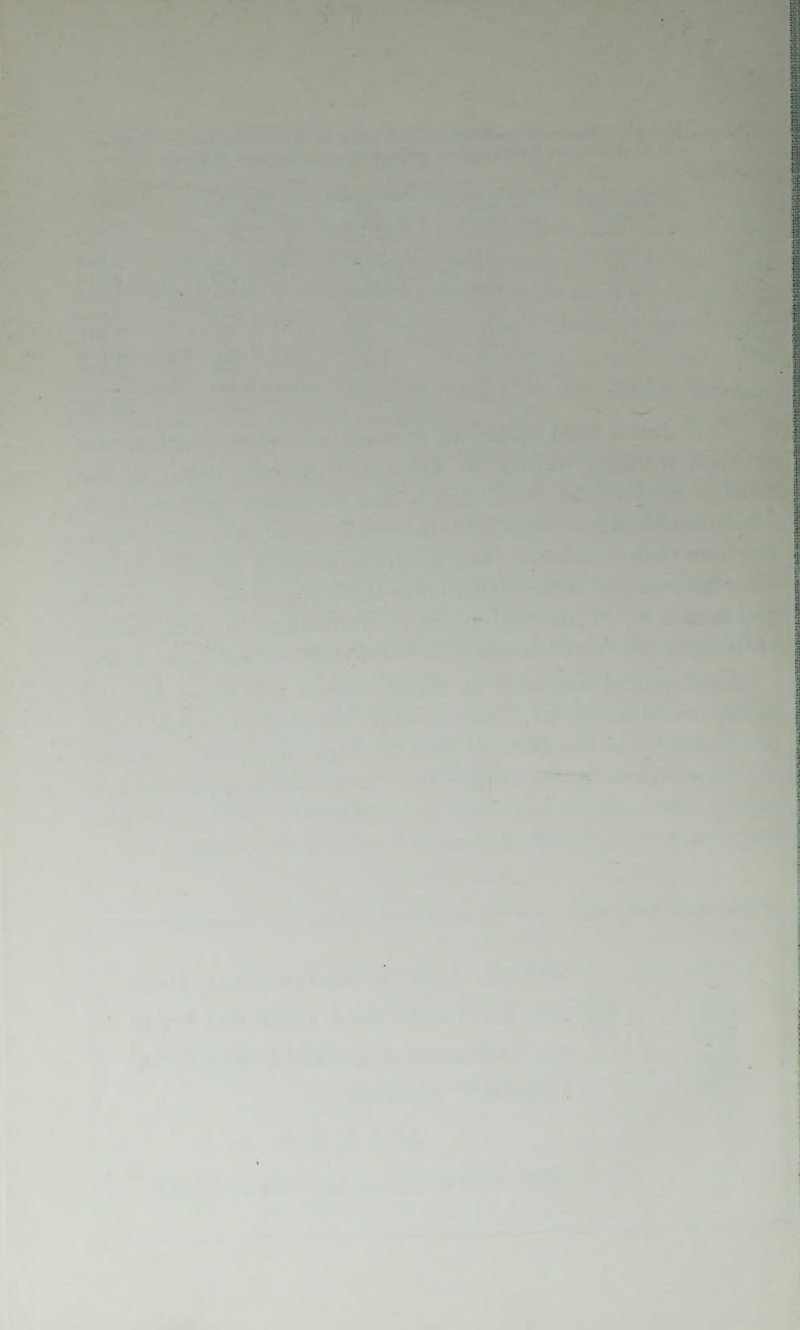
Conferences classified as miscellaneous are those devoted to the investigation of reported work histories of newly registered clients, to considering with local public spirited citizens plans for improving the bureau's service to handicapped workers and to their employers, and to conferences with individual Board members concerning matters of administration.



**When your grandmother took  
her first ride on a railroad train  
-- who was making Artificial  
Limbs? Answer: ↓**

**MARKS**

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